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TOP SECRET -- EYES ONLY

October 27, 1962

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Secretary  
FROM: INR - Thomas L. Hughes TLH  
SUBJECT: Probable Soviet Response To US Retaliation  
Against An SAM Site

How would the USSR react if the US decided to take out the offending SAM site in retaliation for the shooting down of a U-2 aircraft today?

Purpose of the Shooting Down of a U-2

The most likely purpose which the USSR might have sought to achieve by the incident was the interdiction of US reconnaissance. The Soviets may well have calculated that interdicting US reconnaissance would be likely to drive the US into negotiations on terms favorable to the Soviets.

- (1) A show of force would lend new urgency to the situation.
- (2) The shooting down of an "illegal" U-2 is an action involving high military capability, maximum justification, and wide propaganda potential.
- (3) If the US were deprived of its surveillance capabilities, it would no longer have its present degree of confidence that it knows the location and state of readiness of the Soviet deployments and would be more anxious to enter into negotiations for their removal.
- (4) The interdiction would also preserve some degree of Soviet military secrecy (the Soviets may estimate we still have unfulfilled intelligence requirements which they would prefer to have remain unfulfilled).

The Soviets may have shot the plane down as a means of contributing to the confidence of the Cubans who appear to be growing suspicious of Moscow's propensity for negotiations with the US and are fearful of invasion. Indeed, at the present time we do not know the details of how the plane was brought down and cannot eliminate the possibility that it may have been destroyed by a Cuban or Soviet MIG 21 (if the Cubans have a pilot of their own for it) firing while zooming upward.

TOP SECRET -- EYES ONLY

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